

NE VALLEY COALITION AGAINST METHAMPHETAMINE

Coalition Meeting Summary December 14, 2006

I. Welcome & Opening Remarks

Brent Stockwell welcomed participants and thanked them for attending. Participants introduced themselves and the organization they represented. Brent gave an overview of the coalition and its purpose. The current focus is to complete the needs assessment and prepare the strategic plan by February. The power point presentation is available on the website.

II. Presentation on Meth Enforcement Efforts in Scottsdale

Sgt. Jay Buckler and Lt. Steve Gesell, City of Scottsdale/DEA Joint Task Force

Sgt. Buckler and Lt. Steve Gesell presented information about the work of the Scottsdale Police Department/DEA Joint Task Force. The task force mission is to focus on large drug trafficking organizations that have a nexus to Scottsdale. The task force is decentralized, has local supervision, and is located in a Scottsdale facility. The special agents and the Scottsdale detectives all have Federal credentials.

In 2006, the task force had 32 arrests and executed 28 search warrants. Thirty weapons were seized as well as \$2 million in cash, \$4 million in property, 30 pounds of meth and 90 kilos of cocaine. There was a big increase in meth seizures along the southwest border from 2002 through 2005. This will go down in 2006. The decrease is attributed to a change in route. There has also been a decrease in domestic lab seizures in Arizona from 376 in 2000 to 47 in 2006 due to a shift in production to Mexico. It takes at least 16 hours of police time when they go to a lab site.

The Mexican trafficking organization is generational, family-based, and very close knit. It's hard to get them to turn on one another. They also have good lawyers. There are multiple 100 pound producers. The purity of Mexican meth is 75% compared with 8-40% locally. Bulk pseudo ephedrine is supplied by major drug firms and Mexican pharmacies. The labs are on ranches. Open space is the best place to cook meth because of the toxicity of the fumes. There have been detectives go down just by leaning over a garbage can.

Ephedrine is coming from China. There are drug traffickers that are just ephedrine dealers and have meth dealers. The route goes from China to Michoacan, Mexico, Guadalajara, Sinoloa and then Phoenix. In Phoenix, the drug goes to stash houses where it is divided up and goes to buyers.

Semi tractor trailers in Mexico transport the drug from the lab areas to the Mexican side of the US/Mexico border. Couriers are hired to drive load cars from Mexico to Phoenix stash houses. The task force has seen a lot going to Denver also. Meth continues to be profitable. In July 2005, a pound of meth cost \$6,500-\$7,500 and an ounce cost \$325-\$600. In July 2006, a pound of meth costs \$9,000-\$11,000 and an ounce costs \$550-\$650.

Phoenix and the surrounding communities are in a pipeline. The product is transported in bulk, repackaged in stash houses, and redistributed throughout the United States. Bulk currency is transported through the same pipeline. Dealers will use methods like using cayenne pepper to throw off the dogs or mustard or hiding the drug in buckets of goat blood.

In terms of local impact, the stash houses are used for packaging and distribution. There is a high violence potential and brings a bad element in the community. There is a potential for a decrease in property values and quality of life as well as an increase in crime especially burglaries and identity theft to make money to buy drugs.

The task force uses confidential sources, wire taps, and phone analysis. When a dealer's phone is seized there are usually numbers from others in the distribution network. The task force works to identify links from one investigation to other investigations. Interdiction and post seizure analysis as well as bulk currency seizures and follow up investigations are also important investigative techniques. The exchange of timely intelligence, both domestic and foreign, and partnerships with the Federal, State, local and tribal law enforcement agencies is an important piece of the enforcement process. A new approach is to team with prosecutors to target the financial infrastructure and dismantle the organization not just disrupt it. When the money is taken away, the drug organizations can't afford the lawyers. Everyone is promised a lawyer when they join the organization.

How much of a meth problem is in Scottsdale? The crime numbers such as burglary don't show an increase even though there is a meth connection. Sgt. Buckler indicated that meth is prevalent; the police see it a lot in the community. The coalition can help by encouraging communication with the police. There is a number for tips to the police – (480) 312-TIPS. There is also an on-line version. Also teach people to be aware of what's going on in their neighborhoods and report to the police. Stash houses have some common characteristics: no mail, no furniture, hardly any utility bills, the residents won't associate with neighbors, and the vehicles are in the garage with the doors shut. They are usually rental properties. Burglaries and identity theft are crimes with a meth link based on what is known from repeat offenders.

III. Coalition Announcements

November 30th was National Meth Awareness Day. The Coalition received an award from the Office of National Drug Control Policy for its efforts to create a community coalition. The ONDCP representative mentioned that there are reports on their website regarding the national drug control strategy and the synthetic drug control strategy. They are also seeing a connection with prescription drugs.

Several coalition representatives attended the December 4th strategic planning training conducted by Pima Prevention Partnership. The coalition is on track to complete its strategic plan by the end of February/early March in time to apply for Phase II funding.

There is still a need for coalition representatives to attend the State Strategic Action Planning Summit on January 10-11th. The coalition needs people representing parents/youth, business, treatment, and environmental clean up.

IV. Coalition Business

Brent Stockwell discussed the possibility of changing the coalition meetings to evenings so that more community people could participate. The group decided to try a new time at the end of the day for a few meetings and evaluate the impact on attendance.

V. Community Needs Assessment and Resource Inventory Subcommittee Work

Leslie Reeves and Phil Riccio, Needs Assessment Co-Chairs
Diane McMillan and Tom Ellis, Resource Inventory Co-Chairs

Minutes for the subcommittee meeting are available at the Coalition website www.scottsdaleaz.gov/safety/Drugs/meetings.asp